

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 IO-03 EA-06 NSC-05 NSCE-00 INR-05

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R 191807Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE 183

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BERLIN

USMISSION USBERLIN

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

USMISSION GENEVA

USDEL SALT TWO GENEVA

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL MUNICH

USMISSION NATO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

USDEL MBFR VIENNA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 2571

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, PGOV, UR

SUBJECT: THE 25TH CONGRESS OF THE CPSU

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1. SUMMARY. IN OCTOBER WE REPORTED THAT WE SAW NOTHING LOOMING ON THE HORIZON TO DEFLECT THE USSR VERY FAR FROM ITS PRESENT COURSE EITHER AT HOME OR ABROAD. ON THE EVE OF THE CONGRESS THIS CONTINUES TO BE OUR JUDGMENT. BREZHNEV'S HEALTH HAS IMPROVED, AND WE EXPECT HIM TO DOMINATE ALL ASPECTS OF THE EVENING. THE CONGRESS IS LIKELY TO GLORIFY THE GENERAL SECRETARY AND HIS POLICIES, PARTICULARLY IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS. IT IS EXPECTED TO PROJECT AN IMAGE OF CONFIDENCE AND FORWARD MOMENTUM, WHILE AVOIDING INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS TO DEEPLY-ROOTED DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN PROBLEMS.

2. TASS DIRECTOR ZAMYATIN, ECHOING OTHER INDICATIONS, RECENTLY TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT THE 25TH CONGRESS WOULD BRING NO SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN THE CPSU LEADERSHIP AND WOULD EMPHASIZE CONTINUITY IN DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICY. CHANGES IN LEADERSHIP, EVEN IF THEY INVOLVE THE POLITBURO AND SECRETARIAT, WILL THUS PROBABLY NOT BE "SIGNIFICANT" IN THE SENSE OF MARKING NEW DEPARTURES IN POLICY; THEY MAY, HOWEVER, INDICATE THE CONTOURS OF POLITICAL SUCCESSION AS BREZHNEV AND HIS SUPPORTERS ENVISAGE IT. ANXIOUS THAT THE CONGRESS RECEIVE MAXIMUM WORLDWIDE MEDIA COVERAGE, THE LEADERSHIP WILL MOST LIKELY ATTEMPT TO COME UP WITH ONE OR MORE HEAD-LINE-GRABBING PROPOSALS -- CONCEIVABLY SOME CSCE-RELATED INNOVATIONS, A NEW "PEACE PROGRAM", OR A FOREIGN POLICY INITIATIVE DESIGNED TO APPEAL TO THIRD WORLD INTERESTS. BUT WE ANTICIPATE NO FUNDAMENTAL DEPARTURES IN POLICY. IN SHORT, THE CONGRESS SHAPES UP ESSENTIALLY AS A GLORIFICATION OF THE STATUS QUO THAT HAS BEEN DOMINATED SINCE 1964 BY CONSERVATIVE MODES OF THINKING AND TRADITIONAL SOLUTIONS FOR LONG-STANDING PROBLEMS. END SUMMARY.

3. THE COUNTDOWN TO THE CONGRESS SEEMS TO HAVE PROCEEDED SMOOTHLY. THE FIVE-YEAR PLAN DIRECTIVES WERE PUBLISHED MORE PROMPTLY THAN THE PREVIOUS TWO SETS OF DIRECTIVES. WE UNDERSTAND THAT PLANNING FOR THE CONGRESS ITSELF IS VIRTUALLY COMPLETE, AND THAT BREZHNEV IS CURRENTLY AT WORK ON HIS ADDRESS -- SLATED TO RUN FIVE AND A HALF TO SIX HOURS, ACCORDING TO ZAMYATIN.

4. OUR ASSUMPTION IS THAT THE SCENARIO FOR THE
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CONGRESS WILL FOLLOW THE PATTERN OF THE 24TH CONGRESS: TEN WORKING DAYS, WITH SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 29, FREE, WHICH MEANS THAT THE AFFAIR SHOULD WIND UP ON FRIDAY, MARCH 5. WE ASSUME THE FIRST DAY WILL FEATURE BREZHNEV'S MARATHON CC REPORT; NEXT WILL COME THE BRIEF CENTRAL AUDITING COMMISSION REPORT, FOLLOWED BY "DEBATE" INTERSPERSED WITH SPEECHES BY VISITING DIGNITARIES. THIS PHASE OF THE CONGRESS SHOULD CONCLUDE ABOUT MONDAY, MARCH 1, WITH A SHORT SPEECH BY BREZHNEV AND

UNANIMOUS ADOPTION OF A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE CC'S WORK SINCE THE LAST CONGRESS AS WELL AS ITS PROPOSALS FOR 1976 - 80. KOSYGIN'S LENGTHY REPORT ON THE FIVE-YEAR PLAN WILL FOLLOW ON MARCH 2 OR SO AND WILL INTRODUCE THREE MORE DAYS OF DEBATE, THIS TIME ON ECONOMIC MATTERS, AND MORE VIP SPEECHES. CENTRAL PARTY ORGANS WILL BE "ELECTED" ON THE NEXT-TO-LAST DAY, WITH BREZHNEV ANNOUNCING THE RESULTS AND DELIVERING A CONCLUDING SPEECH ON MARCH 5.

5. LEADERSHIP DYNAMICS. WE NOTED IN OCTOBER THAT THE BIG QUESTION REGARDING THE CONGRESS WAS THE PHYSICAL HEALTH AND POLITICAL FUTURE OF GENERAL SECRETARY BREZHNEV. HIS PHYSICAL CONDITION NOW SEEMS TO HAVE IMPROVED: HE WAS IN GOOD FORM WHEN HE MET WITH THE SECRETARY LAST MONTH. THE PRAISE HE RECEIVED AT THE VARIOUS REPUBLIC PARTY CONGRESSES IN JANUARY AND EARLY FEBRUARY IMPLIES THAT THE PARTY FIRST SECRETARIES IN THE PROVINCES ASSUME HE WILL BE GENERAL SECRETARY FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT, AS THINGS CURRENTLY STAND, WHEN HE STEPS ASIDE OR MOVES UPSTAIRS -- AT SOME POINT AFTER THE CONGRESS - ANY SUCH MOVE WILL BE RELATED TO HIS PHYSICAL RATHER THAN HIS POLITICAL CONDITION.

6. OVER THEIR ELEVEN-YEAR RULE BREZHNEV AND HIS CLOSE SUPPORTERS UNDOUBTEDLY HAVE ACCUMULATED DOMESTIC CRITICS. BUT WE HAVE SEEN NO EVIDENCE THAT DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICIES OF THE BREZHNEV ERA HAVE RECENTLY COME UNDER SIGNIFICANT PRESSURE FROM INTERNAL OPPONENTS. WE EXPECT BREZHNEV AND BREZHNEVISM TO RECEIVE HIGH PRAISE AT THE CONGRESS, AS THEY HAVE DURING THE PRE-CONGRESS BUILD-UP, AND CRITICISM TO BE REGISTERED BY RELATIVE LACK OF ENTHUSIASM OVER THIS OR THAT POLICY RATHER THAN BY OUTRIGHT OPPOSITION.

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AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

USDEL MBFR VIENNA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 MOSCOW 2571

LIMDIS

7. ANY RULING GROUP WHOSE AVERAGE AGE IS OVER 65 MUST BE
VIEWED AT LEAST AS ON THE EVE OF TRANSITION TO A RELATIVELY
MORE YOUTHFUL SET OF LEADERS. YET TO OUR KNOWLEDGE PRE-
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SUCCESSION MANEUVERING IS NOT YET UNDERWAY ON A SIGNIFICANT
SCALE. EXCEPT FOR THE UKRAINE, THE REGIONAL PARTY MEETINGS
HAVE REVEALED A HIGH DEGREE OF CADRE STABILITY IN IMPORTANT
PARTY BODIES. THIS IN TURN SUGGESTS THAT THE CENTRAL LEADERS
WHO ASPIRE TO MORE POWERFUL POSITIONS ARE NOT NOW ATTEMPTING
TO MOVE UP THEIR SUPPORTERS IN THE PROVINCES. THE SHCHERBITSKIY-
SUPERVISED PURGE OF THE DONETSK OBLAST PARTY ORGANIATION,
AND THE OUSTER OF THE UKRAINIAN CP'S SECOND SECRETARY, IMPLY
THAT SHCHERBITSKIY'S POLITICAL BASE HAS BEEN STRENGTHENED,

BUT THIS MAY BE RELATED MORE TO POLITICAL FACTIONALISM AND "LOCALISM" IN THE UKRAINE THAN TO SHCHERBITSKIY'S STANDING VIS-A-VIS HIS POLITBURO COLLEAGUES. IT COULD, HOWEVER, FORESHADOW HIS EVENTUALLY MOVING FROM THE UKRAINE TO A HIGHER LEADERSHIP POSITION IN MOSCOW.

8. OUTLOOK. THERE WILL OF COURSE BE NEW FACES IN THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND SOME CHANGES IN THE CENTRAL LEADERSHIP BODIES, POSSIBLY INCLUDING THE POLITBURO. SHELEPIN'S POSITION IN THE POLITBURO, AND DEMICHEV'S IN THE SECRETARIAT, HAVE YET TO BE FILLED. AGE MAY BRING THE RETIREMENT OF ONE OR MORE OF THE OLIGARCHS, WITH PEL'SHE IN THAT CASE MOST LIKELY TO GO. WE CANNOT RULE OUT THE POSSIBILITY THAT BREZHNEV MAY GIVE BROADER RESPONSIBILITIES TO YOUNGER POLITBURO AND SECRETARIAT MEMBERS, ALTHOUGH THERE IS INSUFFICIENT DATA UPON WHICH TO BASE SPECIFIC PREDICTIONS. MOSCOW IS, OF COURSE, FULL OF RUMORS ABOUT MEN ON THE RISE, AND SHCHERBITSKIY, ROMANOV AND DOLGIKH ARE FREQUENTLY MENTIONED IN THIS CONNECTION.

9. IN ANY EVENT, THE PREVALENT SENSE OF AWARENESS OF IMPENDING SHIFTS IN LEADERSHIP WILL UNDOUBTEDLY COLOR THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE CONGRESS. LEADERSHIP SPEECHES WILL BE CLOSELY SCRUTINIZED FOR CLUES BY MEMBERS OF THE ESTABLISHMENT AT THE CONGRESS AND THROUGHOUT THE SOVIET UNION, AND POTENTIAL CANDIDATES FOR LEADING POSITIONS MAY SEEK TO BROADEN THEIR SPEECHES ON SPECIALIZED TOPICS SO AS TO PROJECT AN IMAGE OF PREPAREDNESS FOR BIGGER THINGS.

10. THE LINES OF ECONOMIC POLICY AT THE CONGRESS ARE KNOWN FROM THE PLAN DIRECTIVES: EMPHASIS ON EFFECTIVENESS, SHORTFALL WILL BE ATTRIBUTED PRIMARILY TO BAD WEATHER, WITH THE CPSU'S
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"BASICALLY CORRECT" AGRICULTURAL POLICY CREDITED WITH AMELIORATING A SITUATION THAT COULD HAVE BEEN MUCH WORSE. POOR PERFORMANCE AND POOR MANAGEMENT WILL BE CRITICIZED ACROSS THE BOARD. BUT FOR ALL THE USSR'S DEEPLY SEATED ECONOMIC WOES, AND THE NECESSITY TO THROTTLE BACK AND CONSOLIDATE DURING 1976-1980, BREZHNEV NONETHELESS CAN EMPHASIZE THAT THE SOVIET PEOPLE HAVE NEVER HAD IT SO GOOD--BECAUSE, AFTER ALL, IT IS TRUE. THE CONSUMER MAY EXPERIENCE A SHORTAGE OF GRAIN-RELATED FOOD PRODUCTS LATER IN THE YEAR BUT MAY NOT BLAME PARTY AGRICULTURAL POLICY FOR WHAT WILL PROBABLY BE ONLY A MINOR DECLINE IN THE QUALITY OF HIS DIET. IT IS OF COURSE POSSIBLE THAT POLYANSKIY WILL BE OFFERED UP AS A SCAPEGOAT, ALTHOUGH THE EVIDENCE FOR THIS IS INCONCLUSIVE.

1. WE EXPECT NO FUNDAMENTALLY NEW GROUND TO BE BROKEN IN THE FIELD OF DOMESTIC POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL POLICY, AL-

THOUGH, AS NOTED ABOVE, SUPERFICIALLY NEW PROPOSALS MAY BE ADVANCED TO GAIN PUBLICITY. FAMILIAR THEMES ARE LIKELY TO BE REEMPHASIZED: INCREASED "PARTIINOST" IN ALL AREAS, THE CPSU'S LEADING ROLE IN GUIDING DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENT, INCREASED DEMOCRACY (DEFINED AS MORE PARTICIPATION IN GRASS-ROOTS POLITICAL ACTIVITIES, UNDER PARTY SUPERVISION). WE HAVE RECENTLY SEEN IN SOVIET MEDIA STRONG SENSITIVITY OVER THEUSSR'S RECORD ON HUMAN RIGHTS; WE THEREFORE EXPECT THE CONGRESS TO EMPHASIZE "GENUINE DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS" IN THE SOVIET UNION AS CONTRASTED WITH THE ALLEGEDLY DISMAL RECORD OF "CAPITALIST SOCIETIES" IN THIS FIELD.

11. IN FOREIGN POLICY, THE BREAHNEV LEADERSHIP CAN BE EXPECTED TO PROJECT AN IMAGE OF CONTINUITY RUNNING BACK TO LENIN, WITH EMPHASIS ON THE CONSISTENCY OF GOALS FIRST ELABORATED BY BREZHNEV AT THE 23RD CONGRESS AND REITERATED AT THE 24TH. THE 24TH CONGRESS'S "PEACE PROGRAM," WHICH HAS COME TO BE IDENTIFIED WITH BREZHNEV PERSONALLY, WILL OF COURSE BE HIGHLIGHTED. THE CALL WILL BE FOR MORE OF THE SAME: CONSOLIDATION AND ECONOMIC INTEGRATION IN THE "SOCIALIST CAMP," PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE AND MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL COOPERATION WITH "CAPITALIST" COUNTRIES, AND CONTINUED SUPPORT TO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENTS "STRUGGLING FOR INDEPENDENCE."

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12. THE SOVIET COMMITMENT TO IMPROVED US-SOVIET RELATIONS, WITH EMPHASIS ON DISARMAMENT, WILL CERTAINLY BE REAFFIRMED, ALTHOUGH WARNINGS WILL BE ISSUED ABOUT "ENEMIES OF DETENTE" AND ANTI-SOVIET PROPAGANDA ALLEGEDLY STEMMING FROM WESTERN FRUSTRATIONS OVER FOREIGN POLICY SETBACKS. THE SOVIETS ARE LOOKING TOWARD THE BELGRADE CSCE FOLLOW-UP MEETING, AND WE CAN EXPECT THEM TO TOUT THEIR RECORD, PROPOSE NEW SMALL STEPS, AND HIGHLIGHT BREZHNEV'S ROLE AS FATHER OF THINGS PAST AND THINGS TO COME. PROPOSALS TO "CONSOLIDATE PEACE" WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY INCLUDE A MORE SPECIFIC CALL THAN BREZHNEV MADE AT WARSAW LAST DECEMBER FOR CSCE FOLLOW-UP CONFERENCES ON ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORTATION AND ENERGY. ALSO INCLUDED MAY BE SOME NEW TOPICS FROM WHICH FUTURE SOVIET UNGA PROPOSALS WILL FLOW, AS WELL AS SOMETHING STRONG ABOUT THE BAN ON WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION FIRST PROPOSED BY BREZHNEV LAST JUNE. WE WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED TO SEE SOMETHING COSMETICALLY NOVEL ABOUT ASIAN COLLECTIVE SECURITY, ALTHOUGH WE DOUBT THE SOVIETS WILL PRESS FOR A CONFERENCE AT THIS TIME.

13. IN SUM, THE OLD MEN OF THE BREZHNEV REGIME MAY BEGIN

TO FADE AWAY AT THE 25TH CONGRESS, BUT ALL EVIDENCE SUGGESTS THAT BREZHNEV HIMSELF WILL HANG ON FOR AS LONG AS HIS PHYSICAL STRENGTH ALLOWS. THE BASICALLY NON-INNOVATIVE APPROACH OF THE BREZHNEV LEADERSHIP TO DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICY IS LIKELY TO CONTINUE IN THE NEAR TERM, NOT ONLY BECAUSE THE SENIOR OLIGARCHS ARE PERSONALLY COMMITTED TO THE FUNDAMENTAL POLICIES OF THE PAST ELEVEN YEARS, BUT ALSO BECAUSE IN THEIR EYES THESE POLICIES HAVE WORKED REASONABLY WELL -- ESPECIALLY WHEN CONTRASTED WITH WHAT THEY UNDERSTAND TO BE TRANSPIRING IN THE WEST. THEY UNDOUBTEDLY BELIEVE THAT, IN THE LARGE SCHEME OF THINGS, THE CORRELATION OF FORCES BETWEEN "SOCIALISM" AND "CAPITALISM" IS SHIFTING IN THEIR FAVOR, THANKS PRIMARILY TO THE "GROWING MIGHT" OF THE USSR, AND SEE EVERY REASON FOR THE SOVIET UNION TO CONTINUE ON ITS PRESENT COURSE.

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